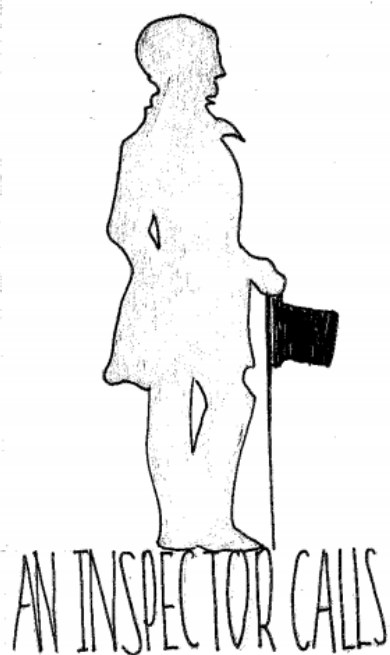


English Literature Academic Writing Guide

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Plays and novel—writing an introduction

In this section, we will deal with the plays and the novel you study. At Passmores Academy, we study *Macbeth* (play), *An Inspector Calls* (play) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (novel).

Why is an introduction important?

An introduction is important because it indicates to the examiner what line of argument you intend to make. It also helps you to hit two assessment objectives (A01+A03).

Look at the model answer below to see how it does these things.

Model answer

How does Shakespeare present Lady Macbeth?

Lady Macbeth is an integral character in Shakespeare's play. She is Macbeth's wife and she plays a crucial role in convincing him to kill King Duncan, to pursue the throne. She is depicted as a manipulative and controlling character. However, as the play progresses, Lady Macbeth's ambition dwindles whilst her husband's grows. Ultimately, she is consumed by guilt and ends her own life. Shakespeare's depiction of Lady Macbeth acts as a deterrent or a warning to the audience: too much ambition will lead to a tragic downfall.

The model answer above hits assessment objective one because it provides an interpretation of Lady Macbeth. It also hits assessment objective three because it discusses Shakespeare's ideas.

You can achieve this by answering the questions 'Who?' 'How?' and 'Why?'

For example, who is the character you will be discussing? How are they presented by the author? Finally, why do you think they've been presented in this way?

If you're asked to write about a theme, this could be adapted to 'What?' 'How?' and 'Why?'

Exercise 1

For the following questions below, write an introduction. Remember to include 'Who/what?' 'How?' and 'Why?'

- 1) How does Priestley present the change in Sheila, in *An Inspector Calls*?
- 2) How does Shakespeare present Macbeth as a tragic hero in *Macbeth*?
- 3) How does Stevenson present Hyde as a frightening outsider in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*?
- 4) How does Priestley present the theme of responsibility, in *An Inspector Calls*?

You can compare your introductions to the answers on the following page.

Plays and novel—writing an introduction

Exercise 1

Model answers

1) How does Priestley present the change in Sheila, in *An Inspector Calls*?

In *An Inspector Calls*, Sheila is the daughter of a wealthy upper middle class family. At the beginning of the play, she is presented as immature and spoilt. However, as the play progresses, she is shown to accept responsibility for her actions and is a character that, unlike the older generation, advocates change. Priestley has presented her in this way to suggest hope for the younger generation, implying that they may be the ones who can adopt socialist ideas and affect social change.

2) How does Shakespeare present Macbeth as a tragic hero in *Macbeth*?

Macbeth is the lead character in Shakespeare's play. He is depicted as a brave and loyal soldier at the beginning. However, he is a tragic hero and, as a result of his ambition, he descends into evil and ultimately dies as a result of his actions. By depicting him in this way, Shakespeare provides his audience with a clear warning; he is suggesting that those who meddle with hierarchical structures will ultimately meet a tragic end.

3) How does Stevenson present Hyde as a frightening outsider in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*?

Mr Hyde is the alter-ego of the respectable Dr Jekyll. He is presented as a ruthless and callous character who behaves in an outrageous and unnecessarily violent way throughout the novel. By presenting Hyde in this way, Stevenson suggests to his reader that all humans, even the most respectable gentlemen, have an evil side.

4) How does Priestley present the theme of responsibility, in *An Inspector Calls*?

Responsibility is the main theme of Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*. Priestley shows the idea of responsibility to be of the utmost importance and suggests that everyone ought to be responsible for each other. Priestley, an advocate for socialism and social equality, uses his play as a vehicle to espouse his ideas and encourage a post-war audience to embrace the notion of social responsibility.

Structuring your answer

Knowing what order to write your ideas in can sometimes be difficult. For *Macbeth and The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, you will be given an extract. However, you do not have to begin with this extract. Look at the example below to see this illustrated for you.

Read the following extract from Chapter 7 and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract Mr Utterson and Mr Enfield try to convince Dr Jekyll to leave his house.

The court was very cool and a little damp, and full of premature twilight, although the sky, high up overhead, was still bright with sunset. The middle one of the three windows was half-way open; and sitting close beside it, taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner, Utterson saw Dr. Jekyll.

"What! Jekyll!" he cried. "I trust you are better."

"I am very low, Utterson," replied the doctor drearily, "very low. It will not last long, thank God."

"You stay too much indoors," said the lawyer. "You should be out, whipping up the circulation like Mr. Enfield and me. (This is my cousin—Mr. Enfield—Dr. Jekyll.) Come now; get your hat and take a quick turn with us."

"You are very good," sighed the other. "I should like to very much; but no, no, no, it is quite impossible; I dare not. But indeed, Utterson, I am very glad to see you; this is really a great pleasure; I would ask you and Mr. Enfield up, but the place is really not fit."

"Why, then," said the lawyer, good-naturedly, "the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are."

"That is just what I was about to venture to propose," returned the doctor with a smile. But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes.

"God forgive us, God forgive us," said Mr. Utterson.

But Mr. Enfield only nodded his head very seriously, and walked on once more in silence.

→ This extract is from chapter 7.

Therefore, I will include it later in my answer.

Starting with this extract, write about how Stevenson presents the idea of secrecy and the unknown.

Write about:

- how Stevenson presents Dr Jekyll's secrets and the idea of the unknown in this extract.
- how Stevenson presents secrets and the unknown in the novel as a whole.

→ The question says 'starting with this extract' but it doesn't mean you have to start your essay with this extract.

To answer a question like this, I would need to consider all of the places in the novel I could use. This question is about secrecy and the unknown. Therefore, these are the places I might use.

- Chapter 1—description of the house 'had neither bell nor knocker'
- Chapter 3—Jekyll's refusal to discuss the will and his reaction
- Chapter 6—Lanyon's mysterious ill health and mysterious death
- Chapter 10—Jekyll reveals his motivations for his actions. The use of non-chronological structure of the novel means the entire thing is mysterious.

If I structure my answer by working my way through the novel chronologically, I automatically give my essay a structure. Read the model answer on the following page so that you can see this in action.

Structuring an answer

How does Stevenson present the idea of secrecy and the unknown?

In Stevenson's novel, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, he creates a strong sense of the unknown throughout. The novel is presented in non-chronological order and also from the point of view of Mr Utterson. This means that Mr Hyde's true identity remains secret until the very end. By doing this, Stevenson creates a gothic horror novel which is full of suspense and unnerving for a reader.

Introduction outlines 'What? How? And Why?

Even from the outset of the novel, Stevenson describes things in such a way that depict them to be mysterious. For example, the description of the house in chapter 1 implies that whoever is inside does not want anyone looking in nor do they want to be disturbed as the house was 'equipped with neither bell nor knocker'. Furthermore, we're told that the house 'showed no window'. By including these details, details which a reader would expect to see on a house, we are left wondering what this house has to hide.

I have started at the beginning of the novel.

The idea of secrecy is continued in chapter three when Utterson tries to raise the issue of Jekyll's will with him. Jekyll responds to Utterson a 'trifle sharply'. Stevenson's use of the adverb 'sharply' suggests to us that Jekyll really does not wish to discuss the will with Utterson. Furthermore, by including this show of emotions, the reader is left wondering what it is about the will that has provoked such a response from Dr Jekyll. This is heightened even further when we're told that he 'grew pale to the very lips' and 'there came a blackness about his eyes'. Stevenson's use of imagery here shows us the extent to which Jekyll has been upset by this topic. Stevenson cleverly employs the use of colour: 'pale' implies that Jekyll has been so upset by this distasteful topic that he feels unwell. Additionally, by using the term 'blackness about the eyes' we understand that Jekyll is full of a dark rage at the mere mention of the will. Nevertheless the chapter reveals no more details as to why Jekyll could feel this way and thus the reader is left with a real sense of ambiguity.

I have moved on, in chronological order. I have also opened my paragraph with a link to the previous one.

Similarly in chapter 7, we witness Jekyll behaving in an odd way. When Enfield and Utterson approach him at his window, he refuses the opportunity to walk with them and claims it is 'impossible'. By using this adjective, Stevenson implies that Jekyll, for some unknown reason, cannot or will not come outside. Jekyll remains speaking with Enfield and Utterson but, later in the chapter, the smile is 'struck' from his face and he 'thrusts' down the window. The use of these verbs highlights the speed with which these actions happen and imply that Jekyll is panicked or frightened. However, Stevenson does not provide a description of what provokes this response, nor do Enfield or Utterson discuss this and once more, the reader is left not knowing what has happened.

Here, I've used a connective to link to my previous ideas.

This is where I'm dealing with the extract from the question.

Finally, the last two chapters are told from Lanyon and Jekyll's point of view. It is these chapters that provide the reader with many answers as to what happened to these characters. However, as the majority of the novel has been told from Utterson's point of view, and we do not see Utterson's response to Lanyon and Jekyll's statements, the character of Utterson himself is left incomplete. The novel ends with the reader not knowing what Utterson will do as a result of what he has read and therefore, even until the end of his novel, Stevenson has maintained the idea of the unknown.

Stevenson not only uses his plot but he also uses the structure of his novel to include mystery and the idea of the unknown throughout. He successfully employs these techniques to make the novel suspenseful. In doing so, the reader is left feeling uncertain and uncomfortable which will have inevitably have been Stevenson's intention in creating a gothic horror novel intended for mass consumption.

I've finished my essay with a conclusion. See page 16 for a section on writing conclusions.

Exercise two: structuring your essays

Look at the example plan for the previous essay.

Then, using the 2 essay questions below, create your own plans.

Example plan

Intro—unknown runs throughout novel. Typical of gothic horror. Novel in non-chronological order.

Para 1—Chapter 1 description of house.

Para 2—Chapter 3—Jekyll's will

Para 3—use extract Chapter 7

Para 4—Chapters 9&10 and how this reveals secrets but left not knowing what will happen to Utterson.

Conclusion—the effects on the reader overall.

Practice question 1

Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 2 Scene 3. In this scene, it is the morning after the murder of Duncan. Macduff has gone to awaken the king but returns with news of his death.

[Re-enter MACDUFF]

Macduff. O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart
Cannot conceive nor name thee!

Macbeth. [with Lennox] What's the matter.

Macduff. Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope

The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence

The life o' the building!

Macbeth. What is 't you say? the life?

Lennox. Mean you his majesty?

Macduff. Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight

With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak;

See, and then speak yourselves.

[Exeunt MACBETH and LENNOX]

Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason!

Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!

Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,

And look on death itself! up, up, and see

The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!

As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,

To countenance this horror! Ring the bell.

Starting with this speech, explain how Shakespeare presents Macduff.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Macduff in this scene
- how Shakespeare presents Macduff in the play as a whole

[30 marks]

AO4 [4 marks]

Practice question 2

How does Priestley present Eric in An Inspector Calls?

Key vocabulary

Macbeth

Not only do you need to express yourself clearly, you also need to use vocabulary in a precise way to ensure you are communicating your ideas correctly. Below, you will find a list of key vocabulary for each character for the plays and novel you are studying.

You can also find useful words and sentence stems to use in a literature essay on page 13.

Macbeth

Loyal - At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is shown to be loyal to the crown and to Scotland.

Courageous - Shakespeare depicts Macbeth to be a courageous soldier.

Honourable - Macbeth is shown to be an honourable character who is duty-bound to King Duncan.

Anxious - When Lady Macbeth reveals her plan to Macbeth, he is initially anxious about the consequences.

Uncertain - In Act 2 Scene1, Macbeth is clearly uncertain about his feelings.

Fearful - Once they have killed the king, it is evident that Macbeth is fearful.

Traumatised - Macbeth behaves in such a way that presents him as traumatised, following the murder of King Duncan.

Ruthless - As the play progresses, Macbeth's actions become increasingly ruthless.

Ambitious - Whilst earlier in the play he was shown to be inferior to Lady Macbeth's determination, by Act 3, Macbeth is shown to be equally ambitious.

Unwavering - By the end of the play, Macbeth's dialogue conveys his unwavering determination to remain king.

Lady Macbeth

Controlling - Lady Macbeth is a controlling character who coerces her husband to do her bidding.

Ambitious - She is presented as an ambitious character who is driven by the desire to accumulate more power.

Manipulative - Lady Macbeth is manipulative; she toys with Macbeth's emotions to force him to do as she wants.

Calculating - In this extract from Act 1 Scene 5, it is clear that Lady Macbeth already has plans for the 'fatal entrance' of Duncan and therefore we view her as a calculating individual.

Domineering - Whilst a Jacobean audience would've expected to see a male to take charge of his wife, Lady Macbeth is instead the domineering spouse.

Decisive - Whilst Macbeth seems uncertain, Lady Macbeth is decisive in her actions.

Duplicitous - Lady Macbeth's duplicitous nature is revealed in Act 1 Scene 6 when she warmly welcomes Duncan into her home, despite her plan to kill him.

Unwavering - Even though Macbeth has doubts about their plot, Lady Macbeth's resolve to commit regicide is unwavering.

Fragile - Though she was shown to be power-hungry at the beginning of the play, by the end she is depicted as a fragile character.

Unstable - Lady Macbeth is depicted as sleep-walking and hallucinating. This suggests to the audience that her mind is unstable.

Key vocabulary

Macbeth

The witches

Eerie - The witches first appearance in Act 1 Scene 1 is eerie.

Manipulative - The witches are shown to be manipulative when they give Macbeth the prophecies.

Sinister - The witches first appearance is sinister and menacing.

Scheming - In Act 1 Scene 3, we witness the witches' scheming ways.

Cruel - The witches are depicted as cruel beings who make the sailor suffer.

Powerful - Their visions of the future show them to be powerful entities.

Vindictive - The witches' discussion of how they will make the sailor suffer shows them to be vindictive.

Ambiguous - The witches' prophecies and their odd behaviour appear ambiguous to an audience.

Mysterious - When the witches suddenly disappear, they are conveyed as mysterious beings.

Deceptive - The witches' claim that Macbeth cannot be harmed by a man born of a woman is deceptive and leads Macbeth into trouble.

Macduff

Loyal - Macduff remains loyal to Scotland throughout the play.

Honourable - Despite the trauma Macduff suffers, his actions remain honourable until the end of the play.

Patriotic - Macduff is a patriotic character, who is driven by his desire to maintain a safe and stable Scotland.

Heroic - Macduff is depicted as a heroic character, in contrast to Macbeth's tyranny.

Banquo

Loyal - While Macbeth chooses to act upon the prophecies he has been given, Banquo remains loyal to Duncan.

Virtuous - Banquo's actions appear virtuous in comparison with Macbeth's treachery.

Shrewd - Banquo's deduction that Macbeth has "played'st most foully for't" shows him to be a shrewd character.

Discerning - Banquo is not entirely trusting of the witches prophecies and is thus shown to be a more discerning character than Macbeth.

Key vocabulary: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Jekyll

Respectable - Jekyll is a well-respected doctor and friend.

Mysterious - Even from Jekyll's first appearance in the novel, his behaviour is depicted as mysterious.

Intelligent - Jekyll's innovative experiments show him to be an intelligent doctor.

Erratic - As the novel progresses, Jekyll's behaviour becomes more erratic. At one moment he is happy to socialise and the next he has locked himself up in his own house.

Alienated - In chapters 6 and 7, Jekyll is shown to have alienated himself from his friends and associates.

Determined - Despite the troubles he faces, Jekyll remains determined to experience life as Hyde.

Hyde

Ruthless - Hyde is completely ruthless when enacting violence upon others.

Unperturbed - He appears entirely unperturbed by his violent acts.

Vicious - Stevenson conveys Hyde as a vicious character who revels in the aggression he displays.

Cruel - Hyde's actions are senseless and cruel.

Violent - In both chapter 1 and chapter 4, Hyde is shown to behave in an unnecessarily violent way.

Ferocious - Hyde's actions are shown to be ferocious.

Animalistic - When Stevenson compares Hyde to an ape, he suggests that Hyde is animalistic.

Uttersson

Respectable - Utterson is a respectable lawyer who is 'austere' with himself.

Loyal - Utterson is described a man who will remain loyal even when his friends experience trouble.

Concerned - When Utterson raises the issue of the will with Jekyll, he appears concerned by its contents.

Calm - Despite Poole's protestations that Jekyll has been killed, Utterson remains calm.

Cautious - Utterson is clearly cautious of Jekyll's associations with Hyde.

Rational - Utterson approaches his search for Mr Hyde in a methodical and rational manner.

Persistent - Despite Jekyll's request for Utterson to leave the issue alone, Utterson remains persistent in discovering the truth about Hyde.

Lanyon

Rational - While Stevenson shows that Jekyll is concerned with 'transcendental' science, Lanyon is shown to be a rational scientist.

Outspoken - Lanyon is outspoken on the issue of what he calls Jekyll's 'unscientific balderdash'.

Energetic - In chapter 2, Lanyon is shown to be energetic as he leaps up from his chair to greet Utterson.

Enthusiastic - He is an enthusiastic character who welcomed Utterson with 'both hands'.

Theatrical - In chapter 2, Stevenson describes Lanyon as a theatrical character.

Mysterious - However, in chapter 6, there has been a monumental change in Lanyon's manner and appearance. This sudden change is unexplained and is very mysterious.

Key vocabulary: *An Inspector Calls*

Birling

Self-interested - Birling's concern for his business' union with the Crofts shows that he is, at heart, uninterested in Sheila's engagement and is self-interested instead.

Self-obsessed- Priestley shows Birling to be self-obsessed at the beginning of the play.

Pompous - Birling's lecture to the young men, at the beginning of the play, presents him as a pompous individual.

Stubborn- Birling's unwillingness to accept anything the Inspector says shows him to be stubborn.

Naïve- Priestley cleverly employs dramatic irony to present Mr Birling as naïve.

Outspoken - Despite being exposed as a selfish character, Birling continues to be outspoken for the entirety of the play.

Materialistic - When Birling offers Gerald the port that supposedly Gerald's father also has, he is shown to be materialistic.

Arrogant - Birling is certain of his views. However, the audience are aware that they are untrue and therefore we view Birling as arrogant.

Mrs Birling

Condescending - At the beginning of the play, Mrs Birling is shown to be condescending towards both her husband and her children.

Snobbish - Mrs Birling has a snobbish attitude towards the working class.

Uncaring - Despite the gravity of the situation, Mrs Birling appears uncaring.

Cold- Mrs Birling's response to the news that Eva has died depicts her as a cold character.

Ignorant- Mrs Birling's obliviousness to her son's drinking problem demonstrates that she is ignorant to what goes on around her.

Arrogant - Much like Mr Birling, Mrs Birling is presented as an arrogant character, unwilling to accept any responsibility.

Sheila

Childish - At the beginning of the play, Sheila is shown bickering in a childish manner with her brother.

Materialistic - Sheila's great concern for the ring Gerald has chosen for her shows that she is materialistic at the beginning of the play.

Assertive - Despite being childish at the beginning of the play, by the end Sheila is shown to be assertive in expressing her views at the end.

Insightful - Sheila appears to be an insightful character and warns her mother to be truthful.

Intelligent - While her parents' unwillingness to accept responsibility shows them to be arrogant, Sheila's willingness and eagerness to learn from her mistakes, shows her to be an intelligent character.

Mature- While her parents appear most concerned by their public image, at the end of the play, Sheila has clearly matured a great deal and is willing to accept responsibility.

Key vocabulary: *An Inspector Calls*

Eric

Childish - Eric is depicted as a childish character who argues with his sister at the beginning of the play.

Irresponsible - Eric's drinking problem and his mistreatment of Eva Smith are examples of his irresponsibility.

Self-conscious - At the beginning of the play, Eric is clearly a self-conscious character.

Lacking confidence - In Act 1, Eric is presented as lacking confidence, uncertain of how to assert his views.

Emotional - When Eric realises the role his mother had to play in Eva's death, he has an emotional outburst.

Assertive- Much like the process Sheila goes through, Eric is also shown to have matured by the end of the play and is much more willing to be assertive in sharing his views.

Gerald

Confident - At the beginning of the play, he appears confident and at ease amongst the Birling family.

Charming - Priestley presents him as a charming young man, happy to joke with Birling and woo Sheila in front of her family.

Evasive - Even once Gerald's affair with Daisy Renton is exposed, he tries to avoid the topic and remains evasive.

Perceptive - Once the Inspector has left, Gerald is shown to be the most perceptive of the characters and deduces that it was not a real police inspector.

Hypocritical - Despite his claims in Act Two that he was upset by the news of Eva's death, Priestley shows Gerald to be a hypocritical character who assumes Sheila will accept her engagement ring back once the Inspector's hoax is revealed.

The Inspector

Imposing - Despite the stage directions that state the Inspector need not be large man, it is clear that Priestley intended the Inspector to have an imposing presence.

Assertive - Throughout Act 1, the Inspector is shown to be an assertive character, unafraid of interrupting Birling.

Mysterious- The Inspector is a mysterious character who, rather than depicting a real person, instead depicts the Birlings' social conscience and Priestley's socialist views.

Prophetic - The Inspector's final speech appears prophetic, claiming that if people do not learn their lessons now, they will be taught in 'fire, and blood and anguish'.

Socially-responsible - The Inspector acts as Priestley's mouthpiece on stage, sharing his views of social responsibility.

Eva Smith

Sympathetic- Priestley depicts Eva as a sympathetic character.

Troubled - The various encounters with the Birlings show Eva Smith to have lived a troubled existence.

Strong-willed - Eva Smith's demand for higher wages and her persistence to survive depict her as strong-willed.

Fragile - Despite being shown to be strong-willed, Priestley's depiction of her as pregnant, 'half-starved' and penniless show the fragile nature of many working class women in the Edwardian era.

Writing the main body of your essay

When you read a model answer, I'm sure many of you wonder what it is that that person has done to make it so effective. You can see it's good. But, why is it so good? Below, you will find a list of tips and tricks to help you make your writing sound more sophisticated.

Model answer

During this soliloquy, Lady Macbeth contemplates her husband's character and considers him 'too full o' th' milk of human kindness'. Shakespeare's choice of metaphor here not only emphasises Lady Macbeth's desire for her husband to be more cruel, it also highlights the concept that femininity or female qualities were considered a sign of weakness.

Tip number 1: using sequence markers.

Some students find it really difficult to get started on their answer. Using a sequence marker shows the examiner that you can locate where we are in the text. Try using the following sequence markers in your writing.

during initially at the beginning before after eventually
subsequently at that point when

Tip number 2: embedding subject terminology.

You can see that above, the word soliloquy has been used. This is a subject specific term used when discussing plays. Are you familiar with all of the following?

soliloquy dramatic irony stage directions foreshadowing
iambic pentameter blank verse prose

Tip number 3: embedding quotations.

In the above answer, you can see the quotation has been embedded into a sentence. This means you do not copy the entire line of the quotation out. Nor, do you say something like "This is proved by the quote".

Writing the main body of your essay (continued)

Model answer

During this soliloquy, Lady Macbeth contemplates her husband's character and considers him 'too full o' th' milk of human kindness'. Shakespeare's choice of metaphor here not only emphasises Lady Macbeth's desire for her husband to be more cruel, it also highlights the concept that femininity or female qualities were considered a sign of weakness.

Tip number 4: showing an understanding of writer and reader.

It's really important to remember that these texts have been constructed by an author. Therefore, we should show an awareness that the writer has made deliberate decisions. We should also show an awareness that the reader/audience has a response to this. You can use the following verbs

The author	The text	The reader
Writes	Implies	Infers
States	Shows	Understands
Depicts	Suggests	Knows
Describes	Indicates	Interprets
Portrays	Reflects	Gleans
Conveys	Symbolises	Realises
Highlights	Reveals	Anticipates

Writing the main body of your essay

Avoid using PEEL

Many of you will have been taught to use the acronym 'PEEL' when writing literature essays. Whilst this can help to guide you and ensure you hit the assessment criteria, if you are aiming for the top grades, PEEL can sometimes make your writing feel a bit formulaic.

What should I use instead?

For the top grade answers, there is no simple formula to generate the perfect essay. Instead, what you need to do is ensure you write in a sophisticated and fluent way, building up your line of argument.

See the two examples below to see what is meant by this.

Model answer 1

Grade 5 answer following the PEEL structure (point, evidence, explain, link to the question)

At the beginning of the play, Priestley presents Sheila as immature. For example, we see her bickering with her brother and she calls him an 'ass'. By including this childish slur, Priestley shows that at the beginning of the play, Sheila can behave like a small child. Therefore, Priestley presents the upper class youth as care-free and irresponsible.

Priestley also shows us that she is materialistic when she gets the ring from Gerald. Sheila says "Now I really feel engaged". This shows us that Sheila is more worried about the ring than about Gerald. The adverb 'really' shows us that once she has the ring, it makes a difference to how she feels, implying material things make her feel differently. This shows us Priestley thinks the youth in 1912 were superficial.

Model answer 2

Grade 8/9—building an argument and grouping quotations together.

In *An Inspector Calls*, the character of Sheila is symbolic of Priestley's hope for the youth. She begins as an irresponsible character. However, over the course of the play she feels remorse for her actions and accepts responsibility for what she's done. Therefore, she stands in stark contrast to the irresponsible attitudes of her parents and thus symbolises the idea that the older generation maintain the status quo whilst the young are open to new ideas.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley depicts Sheila as immature. She calls her parents 'mummy' and 'daddy' and bickers with her brother, using childish slurs. Priestley also depicts her as a superficial character, concerned more with material things than with significant connections with people. For example, in Act 1, she claims that she now 'really' feels engaged when she receives the ring. She kisses Gerald 'hastily' and looks at it 'admiringly'. The use of these stage directions indicate Sheila's greatest concern is with the ring and not with the man to whom she is now engaged. By depicting Sheila in such a way, Priestley criticises the upper-middle class youth of the Edwardian period, depicting them as frivolous and irresponsible.

Task/skill	Self-assess
Look at the question and consider all of the events in the text you could use	
Create an introduction that answers 'who, how, why' or 'what, how, why'. This introduction should indicate what argument you will make about this character/theme.	
Group quotations/references together	
Analyse author's methods	
Work your way through the text chronologically	
Include a conclusion (see page 16 for how to achieve this).	

Plays and prose: Writing an interesting conclusion

Writing an effective and interesting conclusion is an important skill when writing an academic essay. This will be particularly important as you move up into further and higher education.

Often, students just summarise what they've already said in the main body of their essay. This does serve as a conclusion. However, to make it an effective and interesting conclusion, you need to outline what conclusions you have come to as a result of writing your essay.

Look at the model answer below. This has been taken from the essay answer on page 6.

Model conclusion

Stevenson not only uses his plot but he also uses the structure of his novel to include mystery and the idea of the unknown throughout. He successfully employs these techniques to make the novel suspenseful. In doing so, the reader is left feeling uncertain and uncomfortable which will have inevitably have been Stevenson's intention in creating a gothic horror novel intended for mass consumption.

How to write an effective conclusion

- Summarise what the author has done.
- Summarise the effect it has on the reader.
- Summarise why this has been done.

Here are two more examples. Using the success criteria above (bullet points), identify where the model answers hit these expectations.

Model conclusion

Priestley shows an enormous change in Sheila, over the course of the play. By conveying Sheila's transformation from immature and superficial to mature and responsible, the audience become much more sympathetic towards this character. In eliciting this response from his audience, Priestley espouses the idea that the youth are the hope for the future.

Model conclusion

Stevenson has shown Hyde to be a disturbing and destructive character throughout the novel. By ending his novel with Jekyll's despair and ultimate suicide, he indicates to a reader the horror Hyde has inflicted on everyone, even Jekyll himself. By conveying the character of Hyde in this way, the reader is left feeling fearful of the evil Stevenson is suggesting is inside all of us.

Poetry : Writing an introduction

Why is an introduction important?

Poetry is a little different to questions about prose and drama because the question asks you to complete a comparison of two poems. Nevertheless, the introduction still maintains its function in hitting assessment objectives A01 and A03.

Model answer

In both 'Storm on the Island' and 'Exposure', the poets show us the vast power of the natural world. In Heaney's poem, he illustrates the dangers of living in a rural island off the coast of Ireland whilst Wilfred Owen shows us how the weather posed a real threat to soldiers during the First World War.

The model answer above hits assessment objective one. It achieves this by stating why the two poems have been chosen and how they fit the essay question. It also hits A01 when it compares the two poems. The model answer hits assessment objective three when it outlines the writer's ideas/intentions or the historical context in which it was written.

You can see how this has also been achieved in the model answers below.

Model answer

Both 'Kamikaze' and 'War Photographer' show us the impact conflict can have on an individual and what can be lost through their experiences with conflict. In 'Kamikaze', the poet depicts the loss experienced by a Japanese fighter pilot unable to complete his Kamikaze mission; his family and friends no longer speak to him. On the other hand, in 'War Photographer', the poet presents the loss experienced by those directly affected by conflict and also the loss experienced by the war photographer as he grapples to understand where he fits in.

Model answer

Both 'Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'Bayonet Charge' depict violent battles. 'Charge of the Light Brigade' outlines the disastrous consequences of a mistake made by a commander during the Crimean War. Despite this, it serves as a celebration of the soldiers' endurance of such violent conditions. In contrast to this, Hughes focuses on the impact of battle on a single soldier, 'going over the top' in World War I.

Activity: you could try writing an introduction for these possible questions.

- 1) How is nature presented in 'The Prelude' and one other poem of your choice?
- 2) How are the effects of conflict presented in 'Poppies' and one other poem of your choice?
- 3) How is human power presented in 'Tissue' and one other poem of your choice?

Poetry

How to structure your answer

Once you have your introduction out of the way, you need to focus on the two poems and their similarities and differences. You should select sections of each poem that make an effective like-for-like comparison. For example, if I was looking at the power of nature in 'Storm on the Island' and 'Exposure', I could examine how each poet describes the wind.

Model answer

Both poets make reference to the power of the wind. Owen emphasises the pain inflicted on the soldiers, exposed to the elements, stating that the 'merciless iced-east winds...knife us'. By personifying the wind, Owen highlights the strength the wind has and by using the verb 'knife' the reader is led to believe that the soldiers suffer a great deal of pain through their exposure to this element. On the other hand, unlike Owen who illustrates the pain caused by the wind, Heaney, instead creates an interesting juxtaposition of ideas when he states that the islanders are 'bombarded by empty air'. Here, similarly to Owen, Heaney uses the verb 'bombarded', implying a great deal of force and possible destruction. Nevertheless, Heaney's use of the phrase 'empty air' is interesting because it creates a contrast with the idea of destruction and instead emphasises the idea of the invisibility of the powerful elements.

Top tips for structuring your answer

- Think about the connections between the two poems.
- Open your paragraph with a statement that explains this clear point of comparison.
- Explore a section of poem one and analyse the poet's methods.
- Make a comparison to poem two, analysing the poet's methods.

You can see how this structure could be employed across the body of an essay on

How do poets present the effects of conflict in Remains and one other poem of your choice?

Unlike traditional war poetry which either depicts the glory of war or the bleak battlefield, Poppies and Remains both deal with modern concerns regarding warfare. In Remains, Armitage depicts the debilitating effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. While, in Poppies, Weir gives a voice to a mother impacted by her son's departure for war.

Introduction outlines argument. See page

In both poems, the poets explore the impact on the individual as a result of conflict. However, in Remains, we get an insight into the violence of war. For example, the speaker recalls shooting a looter, describing the bullet as it 'rips through his life' and that he sees 'broad daylight on the other side' of the looter's body. These graphic images not only portray the horrendous sights seen in war, they also illustrate the clarity with which the soldier remembers the incident. For example, Armitage's use of the violent verb 'rips' shows just how quickly and viciously the man's life was ended but it also shows that this vivid memory has remained with the soldier who shot him.

Weir, on the other hand, demonstrates the impact on those who are left behind when their family members go to war. The speaker says she 'resisted the impulse to run my fingers through the gelled blackthorns of your hair' and that she longed to 'play at being Eskimos like we did when you were little'. The speaker clearly wishes that she could treat her grown up son the way she did when he was a child, suggesting to a reader that she wishes she could protect him. Nevertheless, the speaker remains 'brave' but 'threw' the front door open as her son leaves. Weir suggests that family members feel that they must appear strong for those leaving but the use of the verb 'threw' shows us that the speaker has feelings of pent up anger and frustration.

A clear similarity between the two poems is that both poets demonstrate the emotional impact conflict can have on an individual. Armitage demonstrates that the trauma soldiers suffer can leave them with mental health problems. For example, the speaker says that the looter is 'here in my head' and that the 'drink and the drugs won't flush him out'. Armitage's use of metaphors illustrates the significant and damaging impact on soldiers, and suggests that some may have to resort to substance abuse to cope with the memories of war.

Main body of essay follows the structure which is laid out on page 18

In Poppies, however, Weir indicates that once her son has left for war, the speaker is left in an emotionally fragile state. She goes to his bedroom where she 'released a song bird from its cage'. This metaphor implies that the pent up anger she had previously felt is now able to come out as she mourns her son's departure. She also leaves the house without 'reinforcements of scarf, gloves'. Not only does this imply that the mother is in such a state that she no longer cares enough to equip herself against the cold weather, the fact that she has no 'reinforcements' suggests that she has been left feeling vulnerable.

Both poems end with a feeling of sadness and loss, suggesting both speakers will never return to normal life. In Remains, the poet ends with the line 'his bloody life in my bloody hands'. The repetition of 'bloody' is interesting as it indicates the guilt the soldier feels he has been stained with. It is also interesting to note that Armitage chooses to end the poem with a couplet as opposed to the four line stanzas of the rest of the poem. Until now, the poet has used the poem to depict the events of the shooting or the impact on the soldier. The final two lines, however, summarise the feeling of guilt that the soldier has to live with.

Poppies ends with an equally unhappy tone. The speaker says 'I listened, hoping to hear your playground voice, catching on the wind'. The poet once more returns to the mother's desire to revert back to the years when her son was small and she was able to protect him. Weir leaves the ending of her poem relatively ambiguous as we are uncertain as to why the mother is 'hoping' to hear his voice. We are not sure if she simply misses him or whether he has died at war. This ending, much like the ending of Remains, indicates that this conflict has left this mother with a strong feeling of loss she will have to live with.

Ultimately, both poets explore the impacts on individuals and shows us the lasting impacts conflict can have, even when those individuals are not on the battlefield. Weir highlights the emotional impact on family members left behind whilst Armitage shows us the long-lasting impacts on soldiers mental wellbeing. Rather than celebrating the exploits of war, both poets ask their reader to consider the devastating consequences beyond the battlefield.

Conclusion acts as a summary and concludes main findings from essay.

Poetry: Writing an interesting conclusion

Remember, just like when you practised writing conclusions for plays and prose, you need to show the examiner that you're drawing conclusions rather than simply repeating what you've already said.

See the model answer below to see what conclusions are drawn here.

Model conclusion

Ultimately, both poets explore the impacts on individuals and shows us the lasting impacts conflict can have, even when those individuals are not on the battlefield. Weir highlights the emotional impact on family members left behind whilst Armitage shows us the long-lasting impacts on soldiers' mental wellbeing. Rather than celebrating the exploits of war, both poets ask their reader to consider the devastating consequences beyond the battlefield.

Top tips for writing an interesting conclusion:

- 1) Summarise what the poems have in common, relating to the question.
- 2) Summarise in one sentence what poem 1 suggests.
- 3) Summarise in one sentence what poem 2 suggests.
- 4) Write one sentence which draws your final conclusion.

Model conclusion

Both 'Ozymandias' and 'Tissue' present human power as a temporary construction. Shelley uses the physical deterioration of the statue as a symbol for the transient nature of human power. Dharker also highlights the temporary nature of human power by emphasising that human constructs can be destroyed. Whilst literature has been used in the past to commemorate human power, these two poets ask their reader to reconsider its essence and strength.

Model conclusion

Both 'Storm on the Island' and 'Exposure' show us the potent strength of nature. Whilst Storm on the Island highlights the weather's power in comparison to insignificance of humans. Exposure, on the other hand, arguably establishes a more unsettling tone, depicting the harsh consequences of the brutal forces of nature. Overall, both poems depict nature prevailing over man.

Power and conflict poetry: key vocabulary

Ozymandias

Arrogance—Shelley highlights the arrogance of the Egyptian ruler.

Insignificance—Ultimately, Shelley shows us the insignificance of human power.

Temporary—Through the destruction of the statue, Shelley highlights the temporary nature of human power.

Tyrannical—Ozymandias is depicted as a tyrannical ruler.

London

Corruption—Blake depicts the corruption of organised religion.

Despair—Blake's London depicts the despair felt by the working classes in the Victorian period.

Relentless—The rhythm of the poem symbolises the relentless monotony of industry.

Revolution—Blake and his contemporaries were inspired by revolution.

The Prelude

Awe—Wordsworth uses his poem to convey the awe he felt for nature.

Intimidating—Nature is presented as an intimidating force.

Overwhelmed—When Wordsworth describes turning the boat around, we can see how overwhelmed he's become.

Troubled—He is troubled by nightmarish images.

My Last Duchess

Arrogant—Browning depicts an arrogant character.

Objectify—The duke speaks in such a way that demonstrates the objectification of his wife.

Possessive—The Duke is portrayed as a possessive character.

Sinister—The frequent reference to death creates a sinister one.

The Charge of the Light Brigade

Admiration—Tennyson uses his poem as a vehicle to encourage admiration for the soldiers.

Chaotic—He depicts a chaotic battle scene.

Heroism—Tennyson celebrates the heroism of the soldiers.

Vivid—The use of repetition and violent verbs conveys a vivid battle.

Exposure

Bleak—Owen depicts World War One as bleak.

Frustration—The use of repetition throughout the poem symbolises the frustration of the soldiers.

Helpless—The soldiers are presented as helpless and vulnerable to the elements.

Monotony—Owen highlights the monotony of war.

Storm on the Island

Ambiguous—Heaney's ending is ambiguous and could suggest several different things.

Ferocious—Nature is portrayed as a ferocious force.

Intangible—Heaney highlights the intangible nature of the islanders' terror when he says 'it is a huge nothing that we fear'.

Overwhelming—The poem shows us the overwhelming power and force of nature.

Bayonet Charge

Disorientated—The soldier is shown to be disorientated and uncertain of what he is doing.

Frantic—The opening of the poem sets a frantic tone.

Patriotism—It is clear that the soldier questions his patriotism.

Vivid—Hughes creates a vivid image of war.

Remains

Anecdotal—The poem takes an anecdotal tone, depicting the experiences of a soldier.

Colloquial—The use of colloquial language in the poem gives it a relaxed tone.

Graphic—Armitage uses graphic imagery to highlight the sights soldiers have to endure.

Psychological—The poem highlights the psychological damage soldiers can experience.

Power and conflict poetry: key vocabulary

Poppies

Ambiguous— It remains ambiguous as to whether the soldier has lost his life.

Maternal—Weir demonstrates the strength of maternal instincts.

Non-combatants—Whilst much war poetry depicts the lives of soldiers, Weir allows her reader an insight into the impact of conflict on non-combatants.

Tactile— Weir uses many references to tactile imagery.

War Photographer

Apathy—Duffy highlights the apathy felt by the majority of the population, unaffected by conflict.

Contrast—Duffy creates a clear contrast between those who suffer as a result of conflict and those of us that remain safe.

Haunted—It is clear that the photographer is haunted by his experiences of war.

Reverence—Duffy portrays the photographer as treating the development of his photographs with a great deal of reverence.

Tissue

Ambiguous—Dharker's poem is often ambiguous and open to interpretation.

Complex—The poem is a particularly complex one.

Constructs—Dharker alludes to many human constructs such as borders between countries and money.

Temporary—It could be argued that Dharker's poem serves as a reminder that these human constructs are only temporary.

The Emigrée

Idealised—The character images an idealised version of her home country.

Nostalgic— It is clear that the character feels nostalgic and dreams of her home.

Reminisce—Throughout the poem, we see the character reminisce about happy memories.

Tyranny—Rumens highlights the tyranny of rulers who expel people from their home country.

Kamikaze

Consequences—Garland illustrates the harsh consequences faced by a Kamikaze pilot who returned after not completing their mission.

Indoctrination— Garland highlights the indoctrination of Japanese Kamikaze pilots who believed it was their duty to their country to complete the mission.

Ostracised—As a result of not completing his mission, the pilot is ostracised by his friends and family.

Regret—When the pilot appears to question whether his life has been worth living, it appears as though he is full of regret.

Checking Out Me History

Colonisation— Agard highlights that as a result of colonisation, many black people have had their history re-written.

Eurocentric—Agard suggests that history is taught to young people with a Eurocentric approach.

Humorous—Agard's poetry is often humorous in tone.

Identity—Agard uses the poem to explore the idea of the collective identity of ethnic minorities who have been denied access to their heritage.